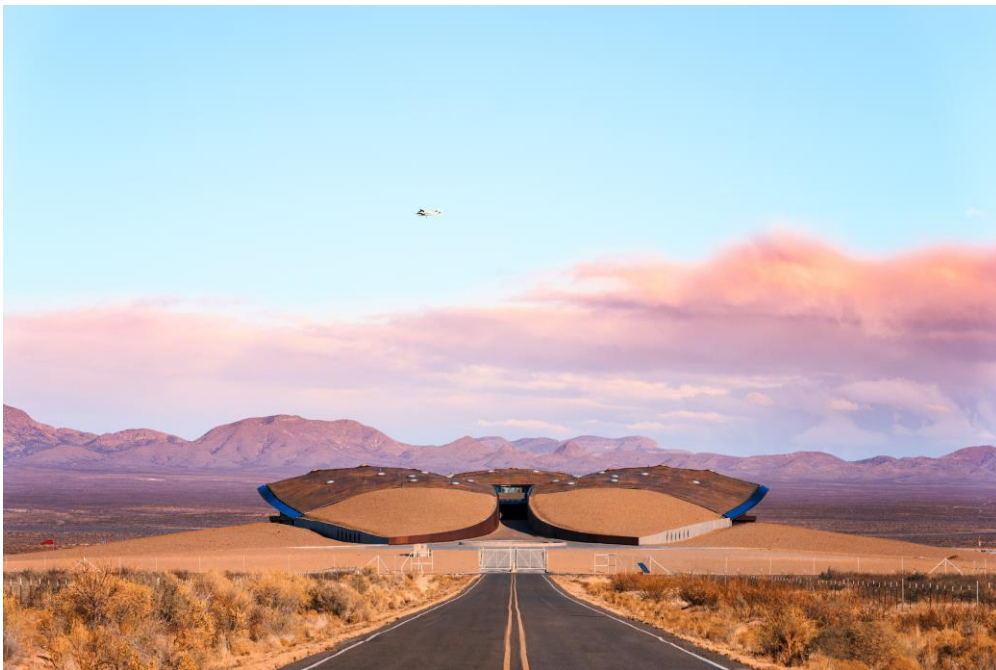




New Mexico's Spaceport America hosts Sir Richard Branson's spaceflight

July 11, 2021, Sierra County, NM- Spaceport America, the world's first purpose-built commercial spaceport, hosted Virgin Galactic's first commercial passenger spaceflight from Southern New Mexico with Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson on board. This is the first of many commercial human spaceflight operations from the New Mexico spaceport as Virgin Galactic looks to begin regular passenger flights in 2022.



The Gateway to Space facility with WhiteKnightTwo overhead at Spaceport America. Photo cred: Will Gard

“This flight is the culmination of decades of work by many hundreds of people focused on the creation and operation of Spaceport America,” Executive Director Scott McLaughlin said. “As the owners of the site, I hope the citizens of New Mexico see the benefits of the investments made and we all see the aerospace marketplace continue to grow in economic impact. Thank you to Spaceport America employees and partners for your dedication over years to get to this point.”



Virgin Galactic's CEO Michael Colglazier, Astronaut Sirisha Bandla, Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and fiancé Manuel Cordova, Astronaut's Beth Moses and Colin Bennett, and Spaceport Executive Director Scott McLaughlin.

New Mexico has been at the forefront of advancements in aerospace since Robert Goddard arrived in the state in the 1930s. Spaceport America's partner White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), is known as the birthplace of America's missile and space programs. WSMR has launched more suborbital flights than any other range in the U.S. WSMR control 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace from the ground to infinity and has an agreement with Spaceport America to share access to that airspace.

Spaceport America has been used as a research and development launch

complex since 2006. It is the only FAA-licensed launch facility with both horizontal and vertical launch areas. Spaceport America has hosted hundreds of flights from student rocket launches at the annual Spaceport America Cup, to Boeing Starliner capsule tests, and now human spaceflight since May 2021.

Spaceport America was designed, built, and is owned and operated by the State of New Mexico. The New Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA) manages Spaceport America. NMSA coordinates all the airspace, manages all facilities across the 18,000 acres, and provides security, fire, and EMT support. All facilities at Spaceport America are paid for by New Mexico taxpayers.

“Spaceport America is currently in talks with several customers and tenants that encompass vertical and horizontal launches, engine building and testing, and UAS/UAV training and testing” said Business Development Lead Susan Raitt. “We are in a good position to attract more aerospace businesses to New Mexico and grow our employment numbers in the coming years.”

Virgin Galactic is the largest employer at Spaceport America with around 180 employees and holds a 20-year lease agreement for the use of the Gateway to Space and the horizontal launch area. Other tenants with long-term leases at Spaceport America include AeroVironment/ HAPSMobile, UP Aerospace and SpinLaunch. Boeing, Swift Engineering, Stratodynamics, C6 Launch Systems and White Sands Research and Developers are among the many short-term customers at Spaceport America.

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Spaceport America (<https://www.spaceportamerica.com>) is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace, low population density, a 12,000-foot by 200-foot runway, vertical launch complexes, and about 340 days of sunshine and low humidity.

Some of the most respected companies in the commercial space industry are tenants at Spaceport America: [Virgin Galactic](#), [HAPSMobile](#)/ [AeroVironment](#), [UP Aerospace](#), and [SpinLaunch](#).

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